

Board of Commissioners

Earl Pugh, Jr., Chair
Tom Pahl, Vice-Chair
Benjamin Simmons, III
Shannon Swindell
James Topping

COUNTY OF HYDE

30 Oyster Creek Road
PO Box 188
SWAN QUARTER, NORTH CAROLINA 27885
252-926-4400
252-926-3701 Fax

Kris Cahoon Noble
County Manager

Franz Holscher
County Attorney

Lois Stotesberry, CMC, NCCCC
Clerk to the Board



**RESOLUTION Against Southern Flounder Amendment 2 and the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries Recommendation to the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission
June 3, 2019**

WHEREAS, the Southern Flounder Amendment 2 and the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries are recommending cutting the southern flounder harvest by 62% in 2019 and 72% in 2020;

WHEREAS, the southern flounder fishery is absolutely a cornerstone of the Ocracoke and Hyde County economy;

WHEREAS, Ocracoke Seafood is the only fish house left on Ocracoke Island and is a fishermen owned enterprise that buys fish, oysters and clams from over 30 fishermen;

WHEREAS, the income generated by sales to Ocracoke Seafood Company supports fishing families, Ocracoke's local tourism economy and Hyde County's tax revenue and sustainability;

WHEREAS, Ocracoke's tourism economy is supported by 12 restaurants which depend on fresh, local seafood to satisfy tourists craving for fresh Ocracoke seafood;

WHEREAS, fresh, wild-caught seafood is one of the top tourist attractions on Ocracoke, adding to the \$1 billion of tourist revenues North Carolina gains yearly from the coastal region;

WHEREAS, 20% of all tourists visit the coast of North Carolina specifically to eat locally caught seafood;

WHEREAS, Ocracoke Seafood Company depends on the diversity of species that the pound net harvest provides throughout the fall to stock the seafood retail and an October 17th closure will remove the primary source of wholesale landings in the months of October and November;

WHEREAS, the recommendation by the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries at the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission meeting to cut the southern flounder harvest by 62% in 2019 and 72% in 2020 with an October 17th closure to the flounder season will make Ocracoke Seafood Company unprofitable;

WHEREAS, Ocracoke Seafood Company's payroll to Ocracoke fishermen averages \$600,000 annually and supports 4 full-time employees;

WHEREAS, the income generated at Ocracoke Seafood Company is recycled into the Ocracoke economy making an exceptional impact during the winter months when jobs and tourists are non-existent;

WHEREAS, Hyde County is a Tier One, Economically Disadvantaged County and the second most impoverished county in the state of North Carolina generating its sole economic survival from agriculture, commercial fishing and tourism;

WHEREAS, the loss of Ocracoke's flounder fishery would eliminate jobs, decrease tax revenue through commercial fishing sales and erase the presence of a fish house on the Ocracoke harbor which is essential to the tourism market that has evolved from this mutually dependent relationship of tourism and fresh seafood;

WHEREAS, Ocracoke Village would not be the same without a fish house and enacting Amendment 2 would negatively affect all business on Ocracoke Island, endanger the presence of the fish house, and this is unacceptable to Ocracoke and Hyde County;

WHEREAS, the Central Region is too large and diverse in regard to flounder harvest and should be divided into two subregions to allow fishermen on the east and west sides of the Pamlico Sound equal opportunity to participate in the fall pound net fishery;

WHEREAS, over the last five years, setting pound nets along Ocracoke and Hatteras have been delayed due to hurricanes and until mid October the catch is primarily summer species including spade, butterflyfish and pompano;

WHEREAS, to be economically feasible, pound net fishermen need a 5-week season starting October 1st and ending after the first week of November, which allows the owner a two week period to recover the expenses of fishing and two - three weeks for the owner and crew to make a profit for the months of work it took to prepare for the fishery;

WHEREAS, Ocracoke Seafood Company is recognized as one of the Golden Leaf Foundation's most successful projects in eastern North Carolina and has been studied by multiple national organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for its unique fishermen owned business model;

WHEREAS, Ocracoke Seafood Company ships seafood throughout North Carolina, specifically targets Raleigh markets and is recognized by companies and tourists who purchase seafood as one of the best examples of fresh, local North Carolina seafood;

WHEREAS, Amendment 2 and the current North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries recommendation to the Marine Fisheries Commission will place all of the dedication, hard work and funding to rebuild the Ocracoke fish house over the last twelve years in dire economic jeopardy;

WHEREAS, the Southern Flounder Advisory Committee has recommended a 31% reduction in flounder harvest in 2019 and a 52% reduction in 2020 with that recommendation being developed through significant debate of the data and multi stakeholder input and allows commercial fishermen one year to adjust their business models that may keep a portion of the pound net fishery operational;

WHEREAS, the average age of a North Carolina commercial fisherman is approaching the mid 50's and those fishermen hold all of the capital and experience in the fishing industry and as they are continually pressured they will retire and move into other fisheries that creates additional stress on those fisheries as well while endangering the commercial fishing industry and damaging the coastal tourism industry;

WHEREAS, the mainland portion of Hyde County has already lost approximately 95% of its flounder fishery, flounder fishermen, fish houses and the economy that those supported because of restrictions that have already been placed on the fishery over the past years, skewing the numbers on the mainland to create an illusion of decreased harvests and decreased stocks because regulations have reduced the number of fishermen and the effort within the fishery;

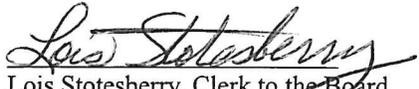
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Hyde County Board of Commissioners unanimously recommend that Amendment 2 and the current North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries recommendation to the Marine Fisheries Commission be voted against and that the two entities work to find a compromise that will rebuild the southern flounder stocks and end overfishing without destroying fishing families, fishing communities and the seafood infrastructure needed to get seafood to market in and outside of the Great State of North Carolina.

NOW, THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, the Hyde County Board of Commissioners unanimously recommend the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries and the Marine Fisheries Commission consider the adoption of the recommendation of the Southern Flounder Advisory Committee of a reduction of 31% in 2019 and a 52% reduction in 2020 with a 5-week season starting October 1st and ending after the first week of November.

Adopted this the 3rd day of June, 2019.



Earl Pugh, Jr., Chairman
Hyde County Board of Commissioners



Lois Stotesberry, Clerk to the Board
Hyde County Board of Commissioners

